My Father, William Denton Moulton
written by his daughter, Bertha Elizabeth Moulton Bowman

It was in a humble home in Irchester, Northamptonshire, England that a baby boy came to bless the lives of Thomas Moulton and Sarah Denton Moulton on July 17, 1843 and he was named William Denton.

Father, with his parents and three sisters Mary Ann, Charlotta, Sophia Elizabeth, and two brothers Joseph and James Heber, joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in England in 1855. The family left immediately for America. A baby boy was born on board the ship, "Thornton", while it lay in dock in the English Channel, where they had hurried grandmother on board. The baby was named Charles Alma and I have often heard Uncle Charles say, he didn't know what nationality he was.

After a six weeks trip by water, the family arrived in New York Harbor on June 14, 1856, and embarked by railroad for Winter Quarters. On June 26, 1856 they went from there to Iowa City. From there they came across the plains in a handcart company with James G. Willie as captain, leaving on July 15, 1856. In this company were 120 handcarts, six wagons and 500 people, of which 66 died on the journey to Salt Lake City, Utah. The early approach of cold weather in Utah, awoke fears for the safety of the immigrants, and at once relief parties were sent out to meet them. Scores of brave men, taking wagon loads of clothing, bedding and provisions went to rescue their unfortunate fellows, struggling through deep snows and piercing winds along the Platte and the Sweetwater. Among those that went out to meet the immigrants were several returned missionaries just home from Europe. Traveling west they, with others, had overtaken and passed the delayed companies, and on arriving at Salt Lake had reported their condition to President Brigham Young, and then returned to help rescue them. This was all in 1856.

Cold weather set in and severe it was. One brother, James Heber, had his fingers on his left hand frozen to such an extent that it was necessary to amputate them when the company arrived in Salt Lake.

Nothing ever shook the faith or courage of this family in a desire to get to Utah. They arrived in Salt Lake Valley on November 9, 1856 having experienced many hardships, fatigue, scanty food supplies and to see so many (66) buried on the way.

The roads were bad and supplies were getting very scarce and had not President Brigham Young sent supplies and help the entire company would have perished.

The family moved to Provo where they lived until the spring of 1860 when they moved to Hever, Utah. There were only nine families when they arrived in Heber. Three more sons were born, Denton in Provo, John Ephraim and George Franklin in Heber. This made a family of seven boys and three girls. They became one of the most influential families in the Valley.

After growing to manhood, amid the struggles of pioneer life, Father became a member of the Black-Hawk Army, who so bravely protected the homes of their loved ones. Indians were becoming numerous and a great menace to the community, stealing their horses and cattle.

When Father was twenty-two years old, he married Mary Lavina Lee, also a real pioneer, with courage and faith in the gospel, on July 24, 1865 by Joseph S. Murdock. Three years later they went to the endowment house for their endowments, and to be sealed for time and all eternity. Soon after, Father left for Florence Nebraska to meet the immigrants. Many temptations awaited these young teamsters, as you will see by the following items taken from letters he wrote to Mother while away. These letters were written in 1868 in ink and on the best of paper and are in fine condition.

William Denton Moulton
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First letter, Friday, June 26, 1868 on the Muddy road.

We are camped 10 miles below Muddy. We are enjoying good health and have had a pretty lucky trip so far, with the exception of the Chack-Creek bridge swimming away. Don't know whether it was we Bull-Whackers (teamsters) that scared it away or not, but I do know it went away just as we got to it. We had the pleasure of seeing it go, and of seeing theCoalville-ites build another on Sunday, instead of going to meeting.

We had plenty of dust for first part of our trip, and the sun was hot enough to roast beef steak, if we had only had some to try it. Then after that, come a cold spell which ended in a big snowstorm 3 inches deep. You would have thought it was the 45th day of December.

We caught up with the company on Tuesday at Cashe Cave. We had a very good captain, and 63 wagons. We are having flap-jacks and molasses for a change for supper.

Sunday, June 28, 1868 Hams Ford 2 o'clock p.m.

The sorrowful news came into camp last night that some teamsters that were with the train ahead of us, had drowned in Green River. The particulars of it hasn't come yet.

Monday, June 29, 1868 Green River, Wyoming

We crossed Green River to day with our wagons on the ferry-boat. We have been swimming out cattle across all day and there is about one third of them to swim over tomorrow.

We have learned the particulars of those men that was drowned in Green River last Thursday. There were five from San Pete and one from Cache Valley. They was ferrying their cattle and had the boat loaded. They (the cattle) crowded to one corner of the boat and sunk it and broke the tug rope. There were two couples seen going down in each others arms. It has cast a sadness over us.

Wednesday, July 15, 1868, North Platte Nebraska

We have enjoyed good health and strength since we left home, and we thank the Lord for it. We hope the ones at home are enjoying the same blessings. I wrote you a letter at Green River, Wyoming and one at Pacific Springs. We had a general wash day Monday, if you could have seen us do woman's work you would have had a good laugh at our awkwardness. I tried to do some mending, but was a good deal worse at that than I was at washing. I expect my cloths will need mending considerable before I get back, having to stay here so long. I would object to being a bachelor, if for nothing more than having to wash and mend for myself. I am not homesick yet, but I would like to be home among those I love so dear.

I have been in rough places but I never was in as rough a one as the glorious town of Benton. If I were ask to be a judge I would say that they were a Godforsaken people, very near perfect in wickedness and corruption of this world. I long to see the time when we can bid them adeau and start for our peaceful homes in the West, though I believe the Lord is with us, to watch over and prosper us in well doing. It would not have been quite as bad for us if we could have worked for something to have bought some more clothes with, as wear these out. It is raining very fast to day, and looke like continuing. I expect we will have to live on rather hard fare before we get back. If I had a good bowl of bread and milk 3 times a day I could get along until I get back. Don't send a letter to South Pass City, they charge 50 cents a for mailing. Father closes his letter with a verse,

Have you missed me at home? It would be an assurance most dear;
For to know at this moment my loved one was saying, I wish he was here.

Thursday, July 16, 1868, North Platte, Nebraska

Arrived at North Platte on July 11. All well. Are now camped five miles down the river below the railroad. Five of us boys and the captain and assistant went up yesterday afternoon and had the pleasure of seeing the first railroad train cross the Platte Bridge, and of seeing them lay the rails across the bridge before the train came up. They are completeing the railroad at an average of about one mile and a half a day.

We are now living among what is called the Civilized World. There is a little town five miles from us called Benton. It is made up of liquor stores, gambling soloons and houses of illfame. They are not afraid for the folks to know it, for they put up their signs in plain sight, and in big letters. If this place is not Hell, it is just as near it as you can imagine.

Why they think no more of killing a man out here then you would think of killin a chicken at home. There is scarcely a night but what a man is killed. There was five killings last week. It is almost dangerous to be around them. A man must mind his own business and keep away from them as much as he can.

I get cross sometimes to think that we have to lay around them so long, doing nothing, when there is so much to do at home, among those I love to be with. I realize that there is no place like home among the Mormons.

There has been some mismanagement this year, some where for we expect to have to wait here from 4 to 6 weeks yet, for the immigrants.

They did not start from Liverpool until the 20th of June to cross the sea in sailing vessels, which has no certainty how long it may take them too cross. They might come across in 4 weeks or they might be 6 or 8 weeks.

There are only twenty-four hundred (2,400) coming this season, which is about enough to load 3 or 4 trains, and it happens to fall to our lot for to wait until the last immigrants arrive.

The other trains have got the privilege of loading up with freight, if they can get it, but that is rather hard to get just now.

Unless some of the trains can get loaded up and started for home, we will have to move a good deal further down the Platte for feed, as the grass is scarse here and there is over two-thousand (2,000) head of stock to feed on it.

The Platte country up here is a dry barren mountainous country. We are about fifty (50) miles above the old immigration route, where the Platte River comes out of the Mountains.

Our cattle belonging to our Valley are all looking well. We have some cattle from our Valley that never done us any good acoming down, and I don't suppose they will acoming back. They were tender footed before we got to Weber, (in Utah).

I had to let George Noaks have one yoke out of my team to bring his wagon down here. There is a kind of disease among the cattle that kills them off in a half hour after we can see they are sick. There is 8 or 10 head died with it in our train, but none of them belonging to our Valley.

Sunday, August 9, 1868 Holmans Camp, North Platte, Nebraska

I have enjoyed good health since I left home, and I thank the Lord for it, for I realize that through him we receive all our blessings. We all feel a little down-cast sometimes to think that we can't get any letters from you at home, to know how you are enjoying yourself and whether you have enjoyed good health since I left you, but I am in hopes that I will be home in time to spend Christman and New Years with your. We are expecting to get our passengers in about a week, but we have been deceived so many times that we shall not believe we are going to start until we get half way home. We could have been at home now if the immigrants had been here ready when we first came down. We have had the opportunity of seeing three companies of the immigrants and some of the teamsters has used it pretty well. It was not more than three hours after they got in camp before they were elbowing them around like old sparks. There was a dance got up for them, and they had quite a lively time.

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(continued) I left camp this afternoon on horse back to a camp of immigrants, four miles off, to see the man that had charge of shipping the immigrants at Liver-pool. I read the names of all immigrants and found a few that had relatives in our place Not as many as was expected. There was Howarth and Crook names. They all seem to think that we will be loaded with Denmarkers or wooden shoes.

Out captain has given me the privilege of driving a commissary wagon. It is loaded with flour and ready to start whenever they say , go, and I hope it won't be long.

Monday, August 10, 1868, North Platte, Nebraska

I think we will be on our way inside of ten days. I don't care how soon we bid adieu to this, civilized world as they call it.

We have very little sickness in our camp, but Willard Carrol has been very sick the last 5 days. I thought it was going very hard with him but I am glad to say he is very week yet but is on the improve, and I think he will be able to get around by the time we have to start. He was took at first with a cramp, something like the Cholera Morbux. We got that worked off and them he took the diahreah, which weakened him down until there was scarcely anything of him left.

I would like to be at home with you, and I trust I shall before long. There was one company left here Saturday, and two more will leave here tomorrow. There are several companies ahead of them but they did not come this way.

There are two more trains to load before us, and then comes our turn to take what the "Cobbler threw at his wife".

My address now will be in care of Captain Holman, Robison Ferry, Green River, Wyo.

Friday, August 21, 1868 North Platte, Nebrasks (evening)

I am well at this time, and have been since I left you. We boys all feel cross today, (Ican assure you) about the news we have just heard about from our captain.

He told us this morning that our immigrants would be here in the morning, ready to load up. But when he went up town today, there was a telegram stating that they left New York last night. It will take them ten days to get here to us, and then unless we have better luck than the rest of the trains have had, we will have to wait 4 or 5 days after they are here before their luggage comes, which will be two more weeks at least. We have had time to go to Europe and preach the gospel to the gentiles and converted and baptised them, and immigrated them here by this time. That is, if they weren't too hard to convert. But we could have gone to Florence, Nebraska for the. We would have rather done it than to have stayed here until this time. There is nothing that makes me feel so mean, as laying around doing nothing like have been doing for the last 6 weeks.

I am getting so lazy, that I am afraid that I won't be able to earn a honest living, when I get home.

We are going to move camp tomorrow, to hunt feed for our animals and look our for winter-quarter. We expect to go about 25 miles from the road to find it.

It will be one days travel. Oh, if it was only towards home.

Tell Agnes Daybell that her father and mother and brother are all well and along with us, and that they will come in with our teams, at the same time that we will. Send me a letter to Robinson Ferry, Green River Wyoming.

Monday Morning, August 31, 1868, North Platte, Nebraska

I feel much better and happier than I did in my last letter. Our happiness comes from the news, that instead of waiting another ten days, our immigrants have arrived at last, and there are signs of us being enabled to bid adieu to this lonesome and forsaken country, and to return to those we love in our mountain homes.

We have about 700 Danish in our company, and they are the best looking Danes that ever left Denmark. Our camp looks like a young Denmark, and not to young at that.

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(continued) William Lindsay and George Noaks are loaded with Danes. I had a load of flour, but it took 700 pounds to make the first weeks rations for them, and they gave out a weeks rations before so my wagon was unloaded.

It is getting pretty cold in this country, it froze ice ¼ of an inch thick last night. Willard Carrol and Benjamine Norris are loaded with English. The last of the immigrants have just arrived this morning. The first arrived on the 26 of August. All the luggage has not come yet.

We expect to start out at 2 p.m. this afternoon, luggage or no luggage, for we are tired of waiting. What kind of a load I get I can't say yet, for they are going to load the rest of the train first. I may get freight yet. The captain promised me a load of freight if there is enough left for me after they put what what can in the passengers wagons.

If I don't get freight I will get passengers, and it is all the same to me. Out teams are all right at present, but are getting very poor for want of good feed.

We will be home by the last of September is all goes well.

(THIS IS THE LAST OF THE PERSONNEL LETTERS BETWEEN WILLIAM AND HIS WIFE. THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE ALL THE CONTENTS OF EACH LETTER, ONLY PARTS.)

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The year after father's return, or in 1869, the crops failed and living conditi were so bad that he went to cut ties for the Union Pacific Railroad, which was slowl wending its way westward. It seemed they were to be apart again.

Father and Mother moved from Heber, Utah to a large ranch he bought, nine miles north of Heber just south and east of the Ontario Drain Tunnel. Was known as Rosse' Hollow, then Moultonville, and later called Elkhorn.

A temporary branch organization of the LDS church was effected in the neighborh and Father was the presiding elder.

The beef and milk route contract was secured by Father from the Ontario Mining Company at Park City, Utah some five miles from the ranch. Father built a large roc house with fifteen rooms. It was two stories and had three large basement cellers.

Father built up a prosperous business employing many young men. In a business was, Father was a great influence for good to the surrounding territory by buying stock of all kinds and hay. Father helped many men to get their start in life. Fat would not keep a man on his ranch who smoked or drank. Father's and mother's asked him to take their boys, to break them of the bad habit. He did help many, but is th could not quit, they were sent home.

Father was pointed out as the "model man", of the community and that his hired help could improve if they would pattern after him in industry, intregrity, honesty, and in living the gospel.

Father and Mother were married seven years and had no children which was a grea sorrow to both of them. Mother was urged to allow Father to take another wife, as polygamy was being practiced at that time. Mother, being of a very jealous nature, and her great love for Father, and his love and devotion for her, caused her to hesi tate and pray earnestly for the Lord to show her if it was right. She was promised that if she would consent, she would have children. Finaly after much persuasion (not only by Father, but by the authorities of the church), she consented to a secon wife. On December 15, 1873, he married Mary Ann Davis, daughter of William Davis, who lived one and a half miles south of their home, she was also a pioneer girl.

In the following year, both wives gave birth to sons. The second wife having the first. Mother had in all, five children -- William Thomas Denton, Orson L., Sarah Ellen, Ranch, and Bertha Elizabeth. Aunt Mary Ann (second wife) also had five children -- William Davis, Moroni Davis, Thomas Davis, Elizabeth, and Hyrum.

The two families lived in the same house. There was one long dining room where they all ate together.

Father died a young man, only 40 years old, of typhoid pneumonia, on Jan 14, 18 when I was just three months old. Father had lived a life of activity as an average person 65 years old.

Being only a baby when Father died, I only have the beautiful thoughts that Mother and Aunt Mary Ann and the pioneers have told me of my Father. They told me that if I expected to meet him in Heaven, I would have to live a wonderful live, as he was that kind of a man.

He was a kind son to his parents, a loving and affectionate husband and father, kind to his brothers and sisters, to the widows and poor. Many have received help from him.

Father was buried in Heber City, Utah in the beautiful cemetery he helped to make. It is on a sloping hill east of the city. It is a spot of restfulness and peace with the sun shining over it all day long.

Mother never married again, being a widow for over 49 years. She always said she buried all the love she ever had for any man in the grave with Father.

The song, "Ever of Thee I'm Fondly Dreaming", was one of Father's favorite songs which he often sang to Mother, and she requested to to be sung at her funeral by her grand-daughter, Nellie Moulton Earl.

Written by his daughter,
Bertha Elizabeth Moulton Bowman
at Blackfoot, Idaho on March 25, 1942

Recopied by his great-grandaughter,
Vicki Rae Bowman, at Blackfoot, Idaho
on April 23, 1963